THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) US Ambassador to India, Mr. Richard Celeste on October 6, 1998 was reported to have stated "we believe that the only way in which differences between India and Pakistan can ultimately be resolved is through direct bilateral discussions". In response to a question he was reported as having said that "I don't believe that one can view this solely as an internal matter" and that it had "regional and global ramifications".

(b) This was taken up with the United States Government.

On October 7, 1998 the US Embassy in New Delhi stated that US Ambassador's remarks were quoted out of context. On Oct. 9, 1998 US State Department clarified that there was no change in the US policy regarding J&K. Further, it was also stated that Ambassador's remarks were a semantic matter that is not significant from US perspective.

Government have noted the above clarifications.

Denouncement of terrorism in J&K by US President

1316. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that during his address on 21st Sept., 1998 to the General Assembly, the President of United States strogly denounced terrorism in the world in general and in Kashmir in particular and urged the world nations to act together to bring pressure on these States to stop this;

(b) what further steps the US have taken to deal effectively with Pakistan which is encouraging and abetting terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir; and

(c) what steps Government propose to take in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) In his address on 21st September, 1998 to the General Assembly, US President said that terrorism is a "global problem" and a "clear and present danger to tolerant and open societies and innocent people every where". In this context, he referred to the presence of terrorist elements in Kashmir.

(b) and (c) Goverment have consistently drawn the attention of international community, through bilateral interactions and in multilateral forums to Pakistan's continuing and unabated sponsorship of terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir and other parts of India. This matter has been taken up on a number of occasions with the US authorities. The US side has conveyed that they understand India's concerns and that the US takes a serious view of such terrorist activities. US has also designated the Pakistan based Harkar-U1-Ansar as a terrorist organisation under the US laws.

Cross Border Road Traffic between India and Pakistan

1317. SHRI KHAN GHUFRAN ZAHIDI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Pakistan and India have agreed to open cross-border road traffic; and

(b) if so, the details of border areas selected for this purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) An agreement and a protocol, providing a framework and operational mechanism for a bus service between Delhi and Lahore through Attari/Wagha road border for the nationals of India and Pakistan, were initiated and on 3rd December, 1998 by the leader of the Indian and Pakistani delegations following discussions held between the two countries